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SUBJECT: Uzbekistan: Media Reaction to DAS Krol's Visit to Tashkent

¶1. (U) Summary: Local media reports on DAS Krol's visit to Uzbekistan were found only online. Of these, only two were by state media outlets. State media reported on the visit in the context of the adoption of the Annual Bilateral Consultations (ABCs). Such reports were neutral in tone. Independent media brought greater and more varied attention to the visit. End Summary.

Media Reports on Visit Limited to Internet

¶2. (U) Media reports on DAS Krol's visit to Uzbekistan were limited to the internet. No print or television media carried stories on the visit. No radio reports on the visit were heard by Embassy staff.

State Media Focus on Announcement of First ABC

¶3. (U) Among state media outlets, only two published articles on the visit (Gazeta.uz and 12.uz). Both of the websites focused on the announcement which took place during the visit regarding Uzbekistan's acceptance of the U.S. proposal to send a delegation to D.C. as the first step in the Annual Bilateral Consultations (ABC). 12.uz quoted verbatim the Embassy's statement to the press regarding the ABCs. Both media outlets reported on the ABCs in a factual manner, with no commentary.

¶4. (U) In addition to reporting on the ABCs, both Gazeta.uz and 12.uz briefly outlined DAS Krol's meetings with government officials. Gazeta.uz described the meetings as productive. 12.uz also reported that DAS Krol "expressed hope" that a U.S. president could visit Uzbekistan. (Note: the statement overstates DAS Krol's response to a reporter's question at an Embassy organized discussion with local media, the monthly "Press Gap." End Note)

Independent Media Sources

¶5. (U) Independent media sources also reported on DAS Krol's visit in connection with the continuing discussion on the ABCs. However, independent media reports on the visit were more diverse in their coverage of the visit. Specifically, such reports focused on Afghanistan, the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), human rights, hydrocarbons, and the ABCs.

Uzbekistan's Contribution to Efforts in Afghanistan

¶6. (U) Several independent media outlets reported that DAS Krol highly assessed Uzbekistan's contribution to the efforts in Afghanistan. Ferghana.ru quoted DAS Krol as saying that the U.S. "value(s) the advice and contribution provided by Uzbekistan, to (the) resolution of (the) Afghan issue." Both Uzmetronom.com and Ferghana.ru noted that DAS Krol emphasized that Kabul was powered by electricity imported from Uzbekistan.

Reports on Question of Potential Military Cooperation

¶7. (U) Several media outlets noted that DAS Krol's visit did not include discussion of U.S.-Uzbekistan military cooperation,

including inter alia a U.S. base in Uzbekistan. Some reports further suggested that such cooperation is not planned. Uznews.com and Uzmetronom.com reported that there had been no talks on the return of U.S. troops to the K2 base. UzNews.net reported that the U.S. government "does not plan to restore military cooperation with Uzbekistan." (Note: This slightly mischaracterizes DAS Krol's comment at the Press Gap that the U.S. "is not planning" currently to restore military cooperation in the form of a military base. End Note.)

Commercial and Non-Lethal Nature of NDN

¶18. (U) Independent media outlets also discussed the NDN in connection with DAS Krol's visit. Several noted that the NDN served to transport only non-lethal goods to Afghanistan. Two websites stated that DAS Krol was "unable" to specify the monetary value of the NDN. (Note: DAS Krol was asked twice during the Press Gap how much money the U.S. paid for the NDN. DAS Krol responded that decisions regarding shipments were made on a commercial basis. End Note.)

Valuing but not Imposing Human Rights

¶19. (U) Independent media outlets also reported on Krol's comments regarding the role of human rights in the U.S.-Uzbekistan relationship. Ferghana.ru said that human rights issues were discussed in DAS Krol's meetings with his counterparts, but that the U.S. does not aim to impose its own values on other countries.

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Uzmetronom.com similarly noted that the U.S. would always pay attention to human rights but that it would not impose its principles on other countries. Uznews.net erroneously quoted DAS Krol as saying that the issue of human rights "had always been the most import(ant) issue" in U.S. relations with any country, including Uzbekistan.

Development of Unofficial U.S.-Uzbekistan Relationship

¶10. (U) DAS Krol's emphasis on the need to develop Uzbekistan-U.S. relations in non-official spheres was also highlighted by independent media. Ferghana.ru reported that the U.S. wants to improve Uzbekistan-U.S. relations not only on a governmental level, but also in areas such as business, healthcare, and education, and through exchanges of opinion and information. UzNews.net noted that Krol believes the development of independent media in Uzbekistan is also part of the bilateral dialogue.

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